

QUEST



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QUEST

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HELENA SUBA

QUEST

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Note about this *QUEST*

Gathering submissions for this issue, it quickly became apparent that a series of spiritual themes and insistent images had emerged, beginning with Jeff Morgan's speaker in a maze whose "*mortal search for meaning*" nestles alongside Donna Puciani's "*ancient promises*." Complementing this introductory duo of poems, poet Ali Guerra is apt to recognize nature as inherent in the pull toward questions of a divine source, as her first person speaker embraces "*the sunlight beams from beneath the trees...where 'the dwindling light shades our vision.'*" John Deering carries us into a world of Centaurs and destiny, while Stephen Lindsey reminds us of "*Olympus in search of angry gods.*" Poet Penny Coin elaborates on the notion of this "*caustic journey*," as the speaker "*reside[s] in a field of Gods*," while Matt Soderbloom insists that "*this is the ancient struggle / Against ourselves, invaders / From our father's realm.*"

I, myself, envision "*the river god of Alpheus*" chasing me "*along the walls of Archimedes*," as poet Adira Kessler's speaker sees "*a glowing haze*" ascending "*from the ground*." Prose poet and short story writer Ashley Nazario's inserts a compelling prayer in midst of a battlefield, while Desiree Cordero inquires as to "*why it {the soul} is bound in chains ... and locked away.*"

Poet Shawna Mann reveals, "*Some days I am Alice / Tiny and unsure, but holding my ground*" while Marceline Fleurilus asserts that "*powerful is / when you're able to keep your strength.*" Playwright David Fleisher's character Billie Rae promises to "*send...a note from Heaven*" before he perishes, while God awaits for him "*along the third base line.*" Poet Simon Penchik indicates that there is "*no way to pick and choose / the fires however small or close*" while D.C. Panko describes the sight of others passing into the next world, "*weightless with no shape, yet held together in some unspecified shell.*"

The speaker of Jessica Wein's poem, "*Immovable*," expresses her need to "*glide*" and "*find another cave / Until I am complete*," while Autumn Thorpe's speaker observes the "*eternal struggle to discover love.*" Short story writer Amanda Davidson transcends the ordinary as her waitress becomes "*the bearer of good news, the Samaritan's message*," while poet Rosalie Schwartz narrates the way in which "*The Tao then took my hand.*" Finally, George Langenecker, in his poem, "*Alligators*," intuits the way in which "*the alligator basks and seems to smile, / knowing who's drifting to extinction first*," while urging readers in "*Elegy to a Red Maple*," to "*Know the laws of gravity / And the lifespan of tress*," suggesting we will "*fall one day, {us} / who have lived so long... / absorbing the winter sun.*"

Whether explicit or implicit, the individual and collective literary voices in this volume tackle top-heavy questions: *Where is meaning to be found? Is it within, outside, or beyond the immediate walls of the physical world?* In these pages you will hear an echo of imaginative coherence, the human quest to decipher what lurks between the crevices of light and darkness, fear and certainty, despair and hope.

Welcome to *QUEST* fall 2012.

--Lizbeth Keiley

Not a Question of Getting Out

JEFFREY MORGAN

A man in a maze,
Not knowing he's in the center
When he's in the center,
Not configuring the totality of his maze,
Unable to configure the totality of his maze
Because he's in his maze,
stands still.

Then, a voice, unseen, slips away,
but not before lifting the man above the maze.
He almost hit a bird.
One cloud passed through him
and another rained down on him.
The sun beat down on him
between the shadows and the rain,
burning the back of his head,
heating his brain.

He gazed at the maze
with a fiery intensity
and perceived its center,
but the man in the maze
had never listened to the voices in his head
and passed the center too many times to count
in his mortal search.

And, once he had nothing left,
A thin wrap of skin,
A few wisps of fine hair,
He fell over and never got back up.

Patio Incident

JEFFREY MORGAN

Two flames,
One on a wick
and one on a matchstick,
dance in the wind,
never touching,
in a white citronella candle
recessed in a black square pot
set on my patio table.

The wick burns down
while the matchstick
burns its length, lying there,
discarded after lighting the wick.

Suddenly,
a burst of wind puts them both out,
so the darkness and the mosquitoes
rose in the twilight.

Morning in Bergamo

DONNA PUCCIANI

The eye of day opens,
becomes a white rose
in the rain, birdsong
from a clay-tiled roof.
The symposium of sparrows
Ends in a riot of bells.

My small body
grows a face, feet,
wings. The window
frames the white sky,
a balcony of floating laundry,

blackbirds in a clipped hedge
flapping among the persimmons.
A day of sad coats, wet dogs,
square gardens that absorb rain
like ancient promises.

My cousin says,

We breakfast on toast,
tangerines from Calabria,
strong coffee, our little cups

sitting in the saucer
of the present moment,
waiting for the hills
to fall from the fog
and unlock the door to the day
with the key of morning.



MATTHEW MENDISANA

Shoveling

DONNA PUCCIANI

Today I took a break
from translating Italian verbs
to shovel the mounting snow
in the driveway. Tonight
Lake Michigan will rise up
to scatter another armful of white,
but my spade is ready now.

I am grateful for a mind
That can separate past from present,
await the future, and play with objects
direct and indirect. But manual labor
promises respite from the odd phrases
I whisper to myself within windows
iced with my own breath.

The snow likewise shifts
from blade to air, landing on
what used to be a green lawn
sprouting dandelions and, one spring,
a coven of rabbits pink as clover.

This winter, like all winters,
is a novelty at the start,
pretty in its new purity,
then something to be endured
in the briefest and darkest of days,
sinking exhausted into February.

The driveway cleared for now,
I return to my mental labors,
sifting the parts of speech
from foreign climes to a steamy kitchen
on the outskirts of Chicago,
my head filled with random sounds
singing like crimson birds
in a white-silted tree.

Daybreak

ALI GUERRA

Daybreak and the air is cold, brisk.
Sunlight beams from beneath the trees
Among the peaks of the faded mountain range
Your body shelters mine as we stride along the field
I can smell the fabric of the black winter coat
You wore for days on end

Will this linger?

Come dusk along the mountaintops,
We walk persistently, unmoved by the current
And the dwindling light shields our vision
We walk hand in hand as if we cannot see

Will we make it?

Nightfall and a storm surpasses
The crests of the mountaintops
The current rises and the trees swap
Rowdily, hastily from side to side
Our conjoined hands separate, our fingers unlink,

And the earth
It stops spinning, and the moon,
It stops shining and we fall
Deeper and deeper into the dark abyss

Daybreak and the air is cold, brisk.

The Centaur Victory

JOHN A. DEERING

The world of Belthorne has never been much of a world of story tellers. However, one interesting story did happen in that planet, one which was not the result of anybody's imagination: the revolution of the Centaurs.

Belthorne, with its brown lands, its oceans of black and white, and its daytime sky of yellow, had hosted human life for millions of years, but there had only been intelligent civilization for 6,000 years at this time. There were five landmass continents in Belthorne: the Northwest, the Northeast, the Midland, the Southwest, and the Southeast of Belthorne. All five continents hosted human life. Human beings came to exist in all different shades of the human skin color, as different groups of people lived across all five continents.

The Northwest believed in the 10 Sky Gods, who patrolled the sky above, and had created the world Belthorne, with all its plants and animals, long ago. The belief held that the 10 Sky Gods controlled nature during the day, and slept at night.

The Northeast believed in the Sky God and Night Goddess, two equal deities who each belonged to a different half of the day-and-night spectrum. Their belief also held that the 7 Gods and Goddesses of Elements – the children of the Sky God and Night Goddess, and each half their size – controlled the different forces of nature across both day and night: the Air, the Sea, the Land, Time, the Weather, Animals, and Emotion.

The Midland believed only in Ill, a single deity who had created the world, and all the stars above, and created people on the land to take care of the planet. Ill was an all-knowing deity, whose decision was to withhold the answers to all the world's questions, making it the challenge of Man to find it out for themselves.

The Southwest held their belief of worshipping the stars themselves. Their belief was that it was the unworldly forces of outer space which had birthed the planet Belthorne, and all its empty neighbor planets in the solar system, with every star existing as a conscious being. The Southwest's belief was that every human body was meant to one day die, but the ever-alive energy of a person's soul would continue to exist, and float up to the sky after the body's death to take its place in the vast sea of outer space forever.

The Southeast remained adamantly without Gods and without religious worship of any kind. Their belief of how the universe worked involved Belthorne as the only planet to sustain intelligent life in an otherwise lifeless sea of space.

These were the religious differences between the people in all five continents. The political structures and cultural styles were also vastly different across the countries of each continent. All five continents saw fit to run things their own way, believing that theirs was the way the whole world ought to be run.

If there was one thing all of Belthorne was well known for, it was war. As all five different continents, with their different visions and beliefs for how things should be run, clashed in a massive world war, all different sides fought one another at once to get their way.

Enormous boats and arks were used to transport people from one continent to another, crossing the black and white oceans. Soldiers from the armies of all five continents traveled the world to take on every other continent at once. Battles continued to be fought around the world, with each country of people wanting to be the one to establish global dominance. But the people of Belthorne all continued to be the same way as ever.

The Throwing Rock became notorious for being a weapon invention that began in a single country, and later spread across the globe. It had been invented in the Southwest, as a weapon which only the Southwestern Belthorne army knew about or possessed, at first. It was a handheld paddle which required one flick of a wrist to throw a rock into the air, attached to a string which ran through the paddle. The rock was lethal if it hit a person in the head. By then pulling on the back end of the string, behind the paddle, the person using the weapon could get the throwing rock back to its starting point, and throw it again. Though this remained known only to Southwest Belthorne at first, the popularity of the invention spread until all the countries across all the world were using Throwing Rocks in their battles at once.

Often, the men in the Northeast rode on horses, while using bows and arrows to strike their enemies. Riding on a horse allowed much faster movement than walking permitted. Horses were trained to work together with their human masters, and they slept in stables without ever sitting or laying down. The teamwork between humans and horses was first practiced in the Northeast, and after some time the Northwest began to do the same, with the men in its armies riding on horses while holding twin swords, with which to attack enemy troops.

Every day, humans were killed in the war. Sometimes, horses were lost as well. Finally, the Northeast seemed to be gaining control of the war, and its way of doing things, including its belief in the Sky God and Night Goddess, began to look like the one way which would win.

But the Southeast, which so far was the smallest and weakest side of the war, had a clever trick in mind. They had lost many men in the war, and they had retreated away from battle for quite some time, but they still refused to obey an outsider's ways of doing things. So they devised a plan to win the entire war by breeding the Centaurs.

Men and women of science worked to breed human men together with female horses, using artificial insemination. The children who would one day be birthed from the horses would be the half-human, half-horse Centaurs. Their very conception could be said to be impossible, at first, for it was conception without any sexual activity between two beings.

How long would they live? Would they live to a normal horse's old age of 30? Would they live as long as the human's average old age of 80? There were many questions asked by the scientists who bred the first generation of Centaurs. Alas, there would be no way to know, until after the experiment was done, and after the babies were born. 39 female horses were impregnated from male humans through artificial insemination. 19 of the embryos lived past the first month. 10 embryos lived past the second month. Seven Centaurs made it to birth.

When the female horses' babies were born, they were half horse, and half human. The Centaur babies that resulted were the babies who would later change the fate of the entire world – they just didn't know it yet.

It was horses, not humans, who had birthed the Centaurs. They took 10 months of time to fully develop, while horses birthed regular horses in 11 months, and humans birthed regular humans in 9 months. To develop an embryo in only 10 months of time, rather than 11, was difficult and abnormal to the horses. The Centaur babies possessed both human and horse-like properties, but the human properties seemed to be further developed and matured than a regular human from the beginning, because they had been given an entire additional month of time to grow in utero. At the same time, their horse-like properties were one month less developed than regular horses.

There were many things that nobody could know until after the Centaur babies were

up and walking. For instance, their skeletal system possessed two ribcages: one stayed unchanged from the horse's, and one stayed unchanged from the human's. They learned to walk around on their own not long after birth. They displayed a higher level of intelligence than regular horses, with most of the scientists calculating that they would inherit half the intelligence of a human, and a few theorizing instead that they would chemically inherit all or none of their intelligence. Still, the most important questions would not find answers for years yet.

The Centaurs appeared to be like regular horses below the withers – the same place where a waist would be on a human being. Yet everything above the withers took on properties of human beings, which had evolved from a common ancestor along with the apes. Across the areas that would represent the crest and shoulders in a regular horse, their build was purely human, with a regular back, chest, and torso. Their faces looked mostly human, though they were twice as thick as a regular human in the z-axis, or the third spatial dimension, that of depth.

For the first year of their lives, the Centaur babies were foals, just like horses. They learned to walk and run during this time. As half-horses, they could not lie down. Their human halves were always standing upright, although, like regular horses, their bodies were able to exist harmlessly in a permanently upright position. Still, they were halfway between humans and horses, so the foals, the baby Centaurs, still tried to touch the ground with their human hands, to crawl across it. Their caretakers had to make sure they did not spend too much time in positions that would, over the long term, deform their human sides to slope downward.

For the first year of their lives, the Centaur babies were foals, just like horses. For their second year, the Centaurs were yearlings, just like horses. Seeing people in action, and seeing them talk, they eventually began to repeat anything they saw and heard, making as intelligible of a noise as they could make, which was only half as developed as a human being's voice. Yet the experiment went on: experts tried to teach the Centaurs how to pronounce words, and before long the seven yearlings were all taught how to master the words NO and YES.

For the third year of their lives, the Centaurs were colts and fillies, the males and females. Now they proved to have inherited enough from their human fathers to be able to talk clearly. They were each given a name, and they were each taught the names of all the Centaurs and all the people. Soon, they proved to be just as intelligent and fully-formed as a human being. Such an interaction, between the ape family and the horse family, had never occurred in nature before.

The Centaurs were never allowed to leave the area of the breeding grounds in which they had been birthed. They could not go outside to interact with bare nature. The scientists also made sure they were able to spend some time outside, within the zone of the breeding grounds, in a habitat that was healthy for a horse and a human.

So for fifteen years after the conception of the Centaurs, Southeast Belthorne remained quiet in all the wars, keeping to itself and focusing on its plans for the future. Quietly, and in secrecy, they reared the Centaur children and continued to breed more from horses and men. During this time, the Northeast remained the dominant side of the war, with them fighting and defeating the Southwest in the Battle of Ten-Day Slaughter, which resulted in the Southwest collapsing and bending to the way of the Northeast. So now the Northeast's way of doing things was on the rise, now covering two-fifths of the world.

The Northeast's next goal was to tackle and conquer the Midland, and then, eventually, it would take on the Northwest and Southeast to finish conquering the world. At this time, Southeast Belthorne was hardly a threat to anyone, and was not considered to be of great

importance to any country. Many people fighting in the war believed the Southeast to have already lost, with an outside revolution impending.

So the Northeast, having conquered the Southwest, went on to go for the Midland. Violent clashes and battles continued for years, as the two decided who between them would win the war. Eventually, the Northeast won over the Midland, who bent to its ways of doing things. After conquering this region successfully, the Northeast now ruled three-fifths of the world, and had only two regions left to finish conquering the world.

It was the smallest of any side of the war – Southeast Belthorne – which surprised the whole world by making an unexpected move which immediately turned the tide of the entire world war. Now their Centaur animals were fifteen years old. They had been taught the ways of war for years – and educated thoroughly about the history of human wars. Now they were being sent off into the first war in history to go beyond the human race, involving Centaurs as living, thinking weapons, fighting on behalf of the people and the rule of Southeast Belthorne.

While the humans stayed at the homeland in the Southeast, the Centaurs were sent out in four aquatic voyages across the oceans in enormous wooden arks. All their lives, they had been trained to be loyal to their human masters, who took care of their health. All their lives, they had been told to prepare for war, for the magnificent journey which would take them all places. The Centaurs traveled across the black and white oceans of the world in search of the Northeast, the Northwest, the Midland, and the Southwest, all at once.

The first Centaurs to arrive on land were the ones who found the Midland. It had just recently gotten under the new rule of the Northeast. But now the Centaur army from the Southeast was proving a new challenge, threatening to overrun the rule of the Northeast.

So the Centaurs attacked all human soldiers, everywhere they saw them. Every human with a weapon was considered the enemy. The Centaurs fought valiantly, possessing the build of a human being from the waist up, and the body of a horse below the waist. They ran faster than humans. Their lower bodies contained the horsepower of a single adult horse per Centaur. At the age of fifteen, many Centaurs looked as if they were older than 20. They fought with weapons, just as the humans did, and the valiant soldiers succeeded in taking down all their human targets.

The Northeast was surprised to find this assault from the Southeast. Its rule over the Midland was being replaced by the new rule of the Southeastern presence of Centaurs. Hatred began immediately, and the Northeast made it a priority to kill the attacking Centaur army.

But as the Centaurs remained in the Midland, the others reached the shores of Southwest Belthorne. Once again, the Centaurs were insistent on taking over the rule of the Northeast, even here in the Southwest. So the Centaurs demanded that the country's rule be turned over to those from the Southeast. They were met with refusal. The Centaurs paraded themselves down the streets of the Southwestern countries, letting their presence be known to all people.

The Southwest was finding quite a threat from the Centaurs. But the battles continued for several more years, with nobody wanting to give up their rule to the Southeast. So the Centaurs slaughtered all the human soldiers they found, both from the Southwest and from the Northeast, as they declared the Southeast the new rulers of the land.

Unless they got wiped out soon, the Centaurs were looking likely to gain control of three-fifths of the world. This left only the Northwest and the Northeast untouched. But the Centaurs soon arrived to put an end to that. In both regions, their kind arrived in boats and arks, ready to conquer in the name of the Southeast.

So all five continents remained in a state of war. The Northwest was determined to strike the Southeast people where they lived. Fights and battles of rebellion continued in the Southwest and the Midland. But in the Northwest and the Northeast, the battles were being carried out every day which would decide the most important matters in the world.

For the first time, many different kinds of humans set aside their differences to fight the Centaurs together. But it didn't matter. There wasn't anything a person could do against an army of Centaurs, where one Centaur was literally greater and more powerful than one ordinary human soldier. Although the Centaurs did lose some of their kind to the human enemies, they remained largely the victor in the battles for the Northwest. After another three years of war, they had won the region.

This left only the Northeast to fight against the rising spread of the Centaurs. They had been the most aggressive land of people before. They reasoned that, if they could defeat the Centaurs, they could take back control of all the lands, but the Northeast might become more powerful than ever if they could succeed in doing this, for then they would own the entire world. So the Northeast decided it would make it a priority to annihilate the Southeast, and the Centaurs all over the globe.

The Centaurs found their first significant challenge in the form of a human army that was fully ready and waiting for their arrival. Weapons like arrows and hatchets were aimed at their horse-like body parts, to interfere with their ability to walk. Attackers aimed at their human-like heads. The Centaurs, though bigger in size than humans, were not invincible, and a well-timed, well-planned assault against them could still work.

Agonizingly, the Centaurs found their kind being lost in the Northeast. The people in that region seemed to be beating them. So, in the Southeast, they dispatched more Centaurs to travel the world, to all the regions at once, to establish a Southeastern stronghold. The ones who arrived at the Northeast arrived with the intention of taking down any humans that stood in their path, until their rule was the only way.

They fought bravely and valiantly in the Northeast. They did not forget what they had been born for. They had been bred by humans, to be the greatest soldiers who ever fought in a war. They had been born and raised for war, and it was in the path of war that they would stay. The Centaurs stormed the entire Northeast continent until they took down as many humans as they were losing their own kind.

Southeast Belthorne was always continuing to breed new Centaurs every year. At the age of 15, they were sent off into war. They aged faster than a normal human being, having come from horses. But they were capable of forming plans and strategies to the level of human beings. As the years went on, more and more Centaurs continued to be dispatched into the war, and the balance of their population never seemed to be a major problem.

The Northeast refused to bend to the ways of the Southeast. But the Centaurs still would not bend to any way but their own. So the fights and battles continued, and would continue until one side won and the other collapsed. Meanwhile, elsewhere across the world, every other region was beginning to accept the ways of the Southeast.

The Centaurs had proven to be a successful idea. So every country, in every continent, in every place across the world, began to breed their own Centaurs. Men of every shade of the human skin color were bred together with horses to produce every kind of Centaur baby. A new revolution was taking place across the world, and it would have the most tremendous impact on the future of the war.

Across the next 15 years, there was relative peace, except for the conflict between the Southeast and Northeast. Every country was breeding their own Centaurs in secret, and rearing them to learn aggression and the ways of war. Once the time came when the Cen-

taurs were 15 years old – the age at which they were considered to have reached young adulthood – they were sent off to war to fight in the name of the mission. They were glad to fight for the mission which they had been born for.

So every different continent began to fight with their own Centaurs at once, and for the first time it became clear that all the predictability or stability of the war so far had come undone. Now there was no telling who might win against whom. The Southwest annihilated the Midland, with their Centaurs being trained in hand-to-hand combat, which also integrated their horse-like legs into the fighting to produce fighting styles never seen before.

So the Southwest established a new stronghold over the Midland. Now they were refusing to let anyone tell them what to do. The Midland, meanwhile, had managed to defeat and overtake the Northeast, which, before, had been the biggest human threat. The war became strange when the Southwest owned the Midland and the former Midland owned the Northeast. The Northwest, meanwhile, had bred its own Centaurs and moved on to conquer and overtake the Southwest.

Now Southeast Belthorne's army was evenly matched. Now it was no longer the only region in the world to contain Centaurs. Suddenly, they went from being the clear masters of four-fifths of the world, to being at the same level as any other region, with total defeat still a possibility. The Centaurs had spread all over the world by now, and their population was always increasing because of the demand for the war. Positive relations between a horse and its human master were important, because it was the humans who had raised them and taken care of them, and led them down the path of war.

But the more the Centaurs continued to win the human battles and wars, the more bored they grew of their work. The Centaurs were happiest of all when they were together around their own kind, away from the humans for a while. When in the presence of one another, they noticed that they achieved the effect of normal, happy, enlightening lives. They otherwise spent all their time fighting in the name of the human war, but that was just it: the world war had started with humans, and it involved their own systems of land ownership being at stake. Some Centaurs began to raise the question: why fight so hard, to help the humans?

Most Centaurs liked their life-situations, having been raised by humans to one day be sent off to war. But some questioned why their own lives were being dedicated to the humans. Truly, the Centaurs realized, it was they who had achieved the feat of living at the top of the food chain. They were bigger, stronger, and faster than any human being. The humans were inferior to them. So why did they continue to live under the humans' rule?

Across Southeast Belthorne, Centaurs were still being raised. Human beings had always assumed themselves the masters of the world, and the masters over the Centaurs. The Centaurs had to endure their beatings if they so decided, because the people were their masters, who provided them with food and drink, and a place to sleep. It was true that, over many years, Centaurs had endured being mistreated because it seemed that there was no other way to live.

But the Centaurs involved in the war asked their Centaur brothers why they tolerated anything from the human race. Words that would sound like insanity to a person were spread across all the Centaur population, who urged one another to kill any person who treated them improperly. They had been treated as the humans' property from the beginning, for they were in fact living weapons; but many demanded nothing less than full human rights.

It became major news when, in Southeast Belthorne, two Centaur brothers turned against their human master, who had beaten them in a moment of anger after his crops had

been ruined. The two Centaur brothers, defending themselves at first, soon ripped the man's head off his neck, and held the severed head as a symbol to any person anywhere else who wanted to keep the Centaurs in a state of mistreatment.

Fear immediately spread across all of Southeast Belthorne. It was indeed true that Centaurs had, for many years, been considered nothing more than mindless animals, just intelligent enough to talk. It was indeed true that the humans had bred the Centaurs to do their bidding, then remained at the homeland while the Centaur soldiers fought all the battles. It was indeed true that all the Centaurs in Southeast Belthorne were to remain as the property of their human masters for the rest of their lives. Before, the Centaurs were glad to live this life. Now things were changing. One decapitated human being declared the new way that things would go. No longer would the Centaurs tolerate abuse. Now the Centaurs declared themselves the new masters of the world.

Relations between humans and Centaurs were immediately soured. Across the Southeastern countries, Centaurs were seen as insane, psychopathic horse-men who were all waiting to snap. Centaurs who had gotten along with humans for years now exploded with years of repressed aggression. So the humans grouped together, and when they were away from the Centaurs, they were able to say what they really wanted to say: that the Centaurs were becoming a problem, and would be an even bigger problem in later months to come.

Human beings were at the top of the food chain, many people said. This was the way it had always been. Before the human race, man's evolutionary ancestors had fought with the other animals to keep their position in nature. More recently, the Centaurs had been created to help Southeast Belthorne win the war, but the Centaurs were just as much the humans' property as the horses, most people believed. The humans had created them for the war, and they were still the ones who could take the Centaurs down if need be.

But the humans and Centaurs still lived together in the land, so they had to find a way to appear to co-exist peacefully in the public eye, with humans and Centaurs each waiting until the other side was not around to plot the later plans. Overall, across the Southeastern countries, the consensus remained that it was time to take down the Centaur population and take back the world, which had previously been going through a normal human war.

But the Centaurs were plotting a revolution which would change human history forever. Their plan was to dominate the Southeastern continent. Eventually, they would know a world that would belong to them. The new kinds of homes would be built to suit the sizes and shapes of most Centaurs. The new kinds of clothes would be made to fit the horse-like parts of their bodies. Eventually, the new world order would be in place, with Centaurs living everywhere.

This was the dream that they aspired to. Sooner or later, no matter what agenda the people tried to fill the Centaurs with, this was the mindset they eventually found, when in the company of each other: the dream of Centaur brotherhood. They dreamed of living as the new masters of the world, with human history behind them, with their new society in place.

The revolution went on. The human race in Southeast Belthorne tried to return to its old way of doing things, with no Centaurs present anywhere. But the Centaurs stood ready with their army. In homes where people owned Centaurs, they waited for the first sign of an excuse to make a retaliatory strike. As soon as the Centaurs got an undeserved beating, they moved in for the attack, sometimes removing the head from the person with the strength of their Centaur hands.

It was an ugly time for humans in Southeast Belthorne. Meanwhile, all across the world, all different kinds of Centaurs were living in all four other continents, and running the same

revolution. The lightest of the Centaurs were the best swimmers, with their human halves able to hold their breath for over five minutes at a time. The darkest of the Centaurs were the highest jumpers. In all five continents, they kept a grip of fear over the human population, who always plotted their eventual downfall.

There had to be human advantages over the horses, some people argued. So many humans' strategy of choice was to attack the horses in the hooves, to damage their horse-like ability to walk. Even with a working human half, a Centaur would be largely disabled if unable to walk on its hooves, although no human being could win a fist-fight with the Centaur's human half.

It was time to win this war with a battle of wits. The Centaurs knew that the horses had immune systems which were far more immune to disease and illnesses than that of a human being. So they, being half-horse, were halfway at the horse's superior level of immunity. But the humans would never expect a viral warfare. So the Centaurs traveled around Southeast Belthorne with viruses, the kind which would be lethal to humans, but harmless to the horses.

The genocide against the humans continued. The horses remained entirely unaffected, while the Centaurs were affected enough to be somewhat hurt, but not nearly as bad as the humans. The Centaurs' immune systems allowed them to heal within a couple days to the point that the virus was gone from their system completely. All across Southeast Belthorne, human beings died from the viral attacks. The Centaurs threw glass beakers filled with the viruses directly at the people, laughing as they sentenced the people to their doom.

The Centaurs continued their assault, and similar attacks spread to every other region of the globe. Soon, the Centaurs were demanding nothing short of total control and ownership of the world. It was the human war that had resulted in their creation, and it was they who would win the war. Now it had become something far greater than the human world war: it was the Centaurs' own War on Humans. Every day, thousands more humans died to the viruses, while the Centaurs suffered not a single fatality.

Very quickly, they gained control of the war. The Centaurs were now seeing the human populations quickly fall as their own populations continued to increase. Now, for the first time, couples of Centaurs were mating together to produce children which were entirely purebred Centaur. They no longer had to rely on human scientists to create them. This had never happened before: now they were in full control of their own population. Later, all future generations of purebred Centaur would appear slightly different from the first ones, which had been created from artificial insemination.

As the years went on, the human race continued to grow sicker, as the Centaurs annihilated all who stood in their way. They were unstoppable now. They would not be done until the entire human race had been wiped into extinction, with Centaurs overtaking the entire world. The humans pleaded to be allowed to live, hoping to live in harmony with the Centaurs, but to no avail.

At last, the humans' world war came to an end, with every side losing to the Centaurs of Southeast Belthorne. All across the world, Centaurs of all different kinds and colors celebrated the dawn of their day. The human war was over, and the Centaurs now populated the whole world, with no humans at all to tell them what to do.

Clothing, music, and religious practices were now common among the Centaurs, though there were differences in styles and customs across the world. Many believed it had been the destined plan of a God that the Centaurs take over the world from the terrible humans that had lived before them. Now they at last enjoyed the days of peace, the days when all Centaurs co-existed in harmony in Belthorne, a world they now named Kantarian.

Petrified Lightning

STEPHEN LINSLEY

On top of mountain peaks and monoliths
lie bones of lightning strikes immortalized
in rock, prized by Taoists as Scholars' Stones
labeled by scientists as fulgurites.

Like God on the Sistine Chapel ceiling,
heaven extended a finger toward earth;
whenever static charge built up, sparks jumped
the gap like some satanic glassblower
fusing dust into twisted pitchforks,
as if the sky sank down roots into the soil.

If you go climbing your own Mount Sinai
Or Olympus in search of angry gods,
And clouds flash round you to crashing
of thunder and the keening of the wind,
beware the gap between heaven and earth,
or Thor's bolts will rivet you to spot,
leaving your skeleton there to smolder
forever among lightning's stony casts.



ALEJANDRA GUERRA

The Dark Secret of the Vatican

STEPHEN LINSLEY

What did the Swiss guards protect in Rome all those years?
The popes? Well, then what were the popes hiding?
Fabled troves of art, and not just paintings and sculpture.
Whose treasures did their monks save from barbarian flames
by copying in the Dark Ages' dim light?
Homer, Virgil, Horace, Lucretius, Ovid.
Poets.

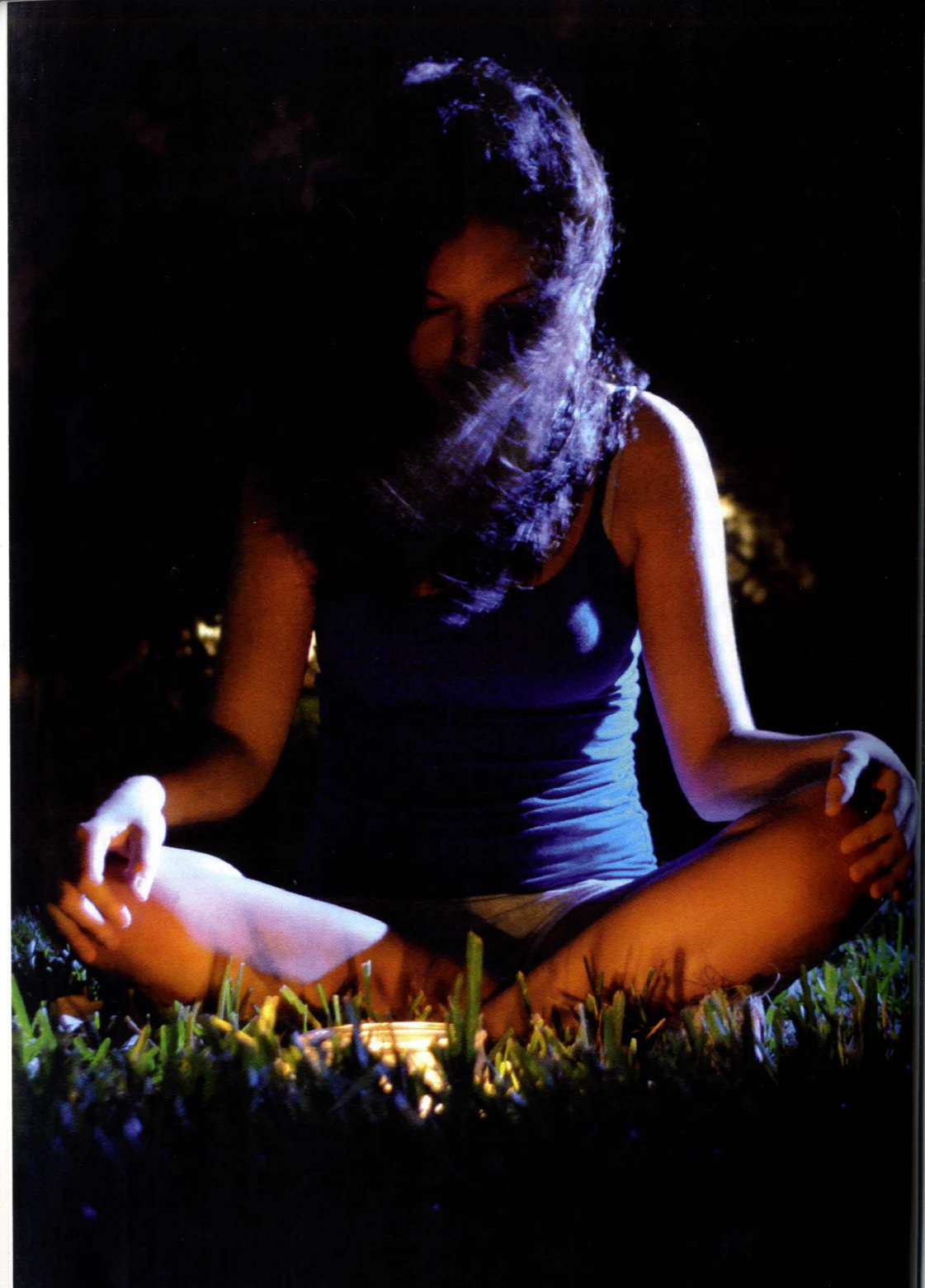
A skein of poets stretching further back into
the mists of Rome than the unbroken chain of popes.
Pagan poets.

Heathen work preserved by their avowed enemy,
an underground society of scribes
not only keeping them alive, but celebrating them.
In an age with no refined poetry of its own,
Those medieval speakers of corrupted Latin
loved to revel in the music of Vergil's language.
Their sacred duties done, the monks laid down their quills,
huddled round the hearth, slipped their cowls down,
rolled their sleeves up, eased a parchment out
of its tabernacle, raised it in consecration,
piously passed it around, pronounced its mystic words
out loud, drank it in with hushed reverence,
their shaved heads glowing from the secret rite
in which they heard the faint echo of a golden tune.

Tongue Tied

STEPHEN LINSLEY

Instead of writing, the Incas tied knots
to express what was in their hearts and minds.
The secret of how to decipher them
went to the grave with the last Inca priest.
Just by looking at their entwined fibers,
you'd never divine their meter or rhyme
because the knot patterns didn't stand for sounds.
It was all in code like computers use.
Encoding with the same number of cord
colors as letters in our alphabet,
Incas could draw additional meanings
by reading the knots with their fingertips
by the slant angle each knot was tied in,
whether forward or reversed, ply or spin,
cotton or wool- dyads corresponding
to the pairs of opposites in their world.
What if they contain musical notation?
They wove strings of adjectives or adverbs,
some with side strands of their own, up and down
every spinal cord. Who says string can't sing?



ALEJANDRA GUERRA

Alluring Endings

PENELOPE COIN

Dream-catchers float above insisting
"I am not Elizabeth Voulger"
but these direct rainbows,
the nymph of Hylas, arouse corpses, the depths of the sea,
and I say these pretty faces won't suffice,
even if I were Porphyria's lover

This is a caustic journey, as pumice to a callus,
birthing Courbet's origin of the world
where sun and indigo waves revive
that which is not has always been

Yet fate's nail abates the grip,
rationality subsides, and flames burn
iridescent out of irises
like the brain approaching
a painful death,
crossing stakes at the gates of Salem.

Alas! I reside in the fields of the gods,
Ozymandias stands controposto agleam with dew
bequeathing diction,

"Hell has frozen over so I'd better geat a sweater"
Your shapely, ivory body over mine,
the Prince of Darkness
sipping the goblet's nectar of wisdom
at the bottom of everything.

Of Cosmos

MATT SODERBLOM

Late night sky,
A resplendent orange pulse.
I say, horsemen above
Lead your chariots against me,
Engulf this world in sorrow
And let this be my last caress.

Late night sky, I stand
A stalwart oak. *I say*,
Devour hemlock divine Socrates,
I am the guardian of this garrison.

Rise fellow Greek!
Shield me from the ruby eye,
The Hun's arrow.

I say, this is the ancient struggle
Against ourselves, invaders
From our father's realm.

Tales from beyond the living sun.

Dreaming in Sicily

LIZBETH KEILEY

I see them from the sea-
Temples, angular, converted to castles

As the river god Alpheus chases me
Along the walls of Archimedes

"I hope you have good cremated ashes,"
He says,

The word tyrant, delight in all things
Known and unknown,

You carry the message-
No—the message carries you

Along the walls of Archimedes
I must become the castle itself

Peering into someone's dreaming

The Night's Beautiful Light

ADIRA KESSLER

As I sit outside alone
in the quiet moon field,
I relish the beautiful sight
of the glittering blades of grass,
reflecting the comforting moonlight
in the delicate water droplets.

As I stay in the moon field,
I feel a fresh, gentle breeze,
followed by a descending mist.
I see shadows falling off the leaves of trees
as a glowing haze ascends from the ground,
framing shadows and portraying gleams.

From the glittering grass,
to the water droplets...
and from the glowing mist,
to the illustrated beams...
I see the *Night's Beautiful Light*.



MATTHEW MENDISANA

The Muzac

ASHLEY NAZARIO

It was as if no one had stepped foot in this forest for centuries. The ground was soft. Merely inches below the knee, your legs were swallowed by the earth. I marched, left foot, right foot, through the marshes. There was nothing here. No shelter, no salvation, no chance of survival for anytime longer than the sun lasted. Everything distinct. The chatter of insects as they flutter around your head, the slosh of the soaked earth against your legs, and the sky was filled with angst. Clouds the darkest grey the world has ever seen. I heard the crackle of thunder and I tried to make cover in a hollowed, oak. Moss coated the inside, along with a thick air of must and lawn clippings. It wasn't long before the winds tugged at the branches, and the rain pounded the ground.

ASHLEY NAZARIO

The solid earth kicked up under his boots, a cloud of muddy air rose from under his feet. His boots, steel toe, laced up to the bottom of his shin, so tight his legs couldn't breathe. His pants tucked into the top of these leather corsets, they pooled over his boots. From there, his brown shirt tucked into a belted pant, his dog tags lay centered with his zipper. His shaved head allowed the sweat to drip down over his eyebrows; he tried to keep it from rolling into his eyes. The sun was beating down hard that Tuesday, it seemed almost unbearable to some, but not him. The heat was not the enemy he would have to face at high noon when the clouds seemed to omit themselves from the skies. He looked towards the vast fields of soil vacant of water; with his helmet in hand, he set down his duffle, took a breath, and said "Welcome back Sarg, welcome to hell."

His platoon had arrived; he stands at attention, his heels touching, and his shoulders back. "Hello men" he says, "I am Sargeant Winger, you can call me Sarg, I will be leading this platoon, and if you are not ready to listen to every goddamn word I say, you are dismissed." His voice broke the silence amongst the men, their bodies firm, their heavy breaths went unnoticed. They knew why they were there, in his hell, but anything further, they are told. Sargeant Winger knew not of the missions they had completed, nor did he care, he knew what he had in store for these men and knew if they were not to follow, they would die. I wouldn't call it egocentric but more of his right to think that way.

At zero six hundred each man in his platoon had to be dressed to the standardized codes and his barrack was to be tidied and organized. There was no room for rebels in his platoon, nor was there room for fatigue, doubt, or hesitation; "it's what gets you killed" he always says. Any men whose buttons didn't align with their belt buckle was subject to embarrassment, was made to clean their barrack and made to get redressed, and had to do a perimeter run, along with everyone from the platoon. "March to the beat as a whole, because your hide becomes your neighbors, and your neighbor's yours, if there are no perimeters today we can begin." After the barrack checks he led his men onto the field for the last day of recruitment before they were deployed to their bases. Those who have received poor marks will stay on base 22431, and the others will be deployed about a hundred and ninety kilometers west to 22735.

He chose twelve out of twenty seven, his logic, "I would rather have a platoon that is small and sturdy, than to have weak maggots get us all killed." As they arrived at the base, they prayed "Our father save our ass in this battle and you get another day to watch over us amen." They stepped off the helicopter in the order assigned by Winger and stood at attention with their duffle bags at their right knee. "Here lays your destiny" mutters Winger, "Everyday you're going to wake up in battle and every night you will become accustomed to sleeping with it, move out ladies."

His voice became hoarse and weary by day's end; his silence made the soldiers uneasy. When the platoon retired to their tents at twenty one hundred Winger stayed behind and went to the edge of the trenches dug earlier. He looked to the stars set so far back in the creamy dark sky and thought about his wife. Through her eyes he could see their life unfold, but he never expected this, he never expected to be back on the field. "Happy birth day Asha, daddy will be home soon." In his mind he did not know for sure that daddy would be home, but he prayed, he prayed that he will make it home as he did once before, he prayed

that his daughters life be filled with joy. He asked god forgiveness for leaving his family and to help his wife be strong in his absence. "Its family that matters the most, you hear that, watch over these men and their families, make sure they are safe cause god knows" he pauses "I will do my best." His hands gripped the soil, dry and warm, like cinnamon under the sun; he looked into the trench and a shiver fell down his spine. He knew what would lay in these trenches, fathers, sons, and husbands, men with families just like him.

At zero five hundred they were awoken by a horn so alarming men nearly fell from their cots. They were dressed in ten minutes and ordered to be at barrack 057 to meet with Sageant Winger for their first mission. "Men, you have slept with danger and you will awake with more duty than the day can handle, the early bird completes the mission. We are to march two kilometers past the overhang and there will be a village. If you encounter the enemy, you kill the bastard, if you die, we die. In the village, you loot what you can and move civilians to the bridge for transport, radio me when the last civilian exits the village. Good luck men. May god be with you." Little did Winger know, the village had already been looted and turned into a hostile armory. The villagers were new miles away and to get to them, they had to somehow go through this armory. Man by man they were ordered to run behind a small clay hut, the walls were so brittle a tumble weed etched a pattern along the bottom edge. Each man scared, and silent, but their heavy breathes did not go unnoticed. Winger sent the last man in and began to follow slowly behind; the dust that was kicked up by their shuffling feet was not unnoticed either. Their tracks were easily followed by the untrained eye of a fourteen year old hostage from the village; it was his sister's life or the life of a soldier. His heart could have fallen out of his chest at any moment, its beating uncontrolled and his breath went unsteady.

Clock

DESIREE CORDERO

In the darkness a pocket clock,
broken, cracked,
a lifeless robot

that once said tick tock

Now, the gears frozen,
ask why it is bound in chains
against the soul that locked it away

Fate shall be terrible for you dear foe
Those limbs, those precious toes

The clock
chuckled in its prison,
waiting for a fool.

Dishes

SHAWNA MANN

You are a perfect plate, fine china, and delicate.
You can take whatever I put on you, a serving of my
Edible self
You push me through life
Like a slow cooker

Or maybe you're not a plate at all – No
You are Tupperware,
You will not crack, will not break

Or perhaps you are a mirror bursting with beauty
An image of everything I deny
Letting myself show
You do it so well
A reflection, in every window, puddle, and silver spoon

There is a constant growling from the pit my body
Demanding your presence
You hold the ingredients to my life,

Me, I'm unstable like dishes
Stacks of dishes
They can be Dr. Seuss or Disney
Some days I am Alice
Tiny and unsure, but holding my ground
As these plates shake beneath me
Other days I'm the mad hatter
Unpredictable,

Praying you still stay
I shake like a blender

I apologize,
I know I can be the bitter taste in your mouth that you cannot swallow away
The broken hand mixer that makes your wrist hurt
The toaster that never fails to burn you

But I am the secret ingredient to your recipe
The dish washer to your dishes
It is an endless cycle
But it is one that I cannot live without

Powerful Not

MARCELINE FLEURILUS

So you think you're powerful?
You really wanna talk about power?
You see...powerful is
When you're able to keep your strength
A secret from others
Powerful is
When no one, other than yourself
Is aware of what you're capable of
Power is
finding yourself doing unusual things that no one
Believe could ever be possible
And you're able to look them in their eyes
And laugh in the inside
Because you know they're wrong
And still...you don't feel the need
To explain your power.
What YOU'RE calling powerful
Is weakness
You're so weak...you have to convince people
To believe that you're powerful
You go around play'n your little role
Acting as if you're untouchable
And yet...you're terrified in the inside
You may fool others into believing you're a tough machine
But you're the fool...if you think you're fooling me.

Editor's Note: "Powerful Not" is reprinted from *Quest's* spring issue, where the last four lines were omitted.

Along the Third Base Line

DAVID FLEISHER

SETTING: A prison cell.

AT RISE: It is close to midnight. Seated on a small bench, facing the audience, are BILLIE RAY MICHAELS and EDNA, both in their mid-twenties. BILLIE RAY is wearing a baseball cap, and EDNA is holding a newspaper and a baseball glove.

EDNA
I've been praying for you.

BILLIE RAY
Did He give you an answer?

EDNA
Yes.

BILLIE RAY
And?

EDNA
He said He's waiting anxiously for your arrival. He's saving you a seat next to Him along the third base line.

BILLIE RAY
Does He know it'll be in about fifteen minutes or so?

EDNA
He didn't say, but I got the feeling He knew.

BILLIE RAY
Gotta remember to take my glove.

EDNA
(Holding up the glove)
I'll give it to you.

BILLIE RAY
Don't forget. I've had that glove since I was eight years old.

EDNA
Don't worry ...

BILLIE RAY

... Where I'm going, you won't be able to send it to me.

EDNA

I won't forget.

BILLIE RAY

When I was growing up, I remember one day I got real sick and Dad came home early from work to be with me. I asked him if I could play baseball in heaven, and he said yes. Dad said when I get to heaven, I'll hear "Batter up!" all over the place.

EDNA

I won't forget to give you the glove, Billie Ray.

BILLIE RAY

I'll be sitting next to you-know-who along the third base line, and it would be embarrassing if I show up without my glove. I'm sure He'll have HIS glove.

EDNA

I had a dream about you last night.

BILLIE RAY

You did?

EDNA

I'll tell you about it later.

BILLIE RAY

Later? Look, things are starting to pile up around here. You've got a glove to give me, and now you've got a dream to tell me about.

EDNA

I love you, Billie Ray.

BILLIE RAY

When I close my eyes in there, I want your face to be the last thing I see. And my glove. Your face, and my glove.

EDNA

Are you okay?

BILLIE RAY

Compared to what?

EDNA

I don't know.

(Pause)

BILLIE RAY

Lethal injection or firing squad?

EDNA

Lethal injection.

BILLIE RAY

When the judge asked me, I thought I told him lethal injection. But who knows? I could've made a mistake. There could be sharpshooters in the other room.

EDNA

Lethal injection.

BILLIE RAY

I'll just fall asleep, right?

EDNA

That's right.

BILLIE RAY

If you're wrong, you'll be sorry.

EDNA

What will you do to me?

BILLIE RAY

Come back and get you.

EDNA

Promise?

BILLIE RAY

I promise.

EDNA

You won't find me here.

BILLIE RAY

Why not?

EDNA

Because you're the only reason I stayed here all this time. Why do you think I looked forward to coming to this hell hole every day? The scenery? The second I came through the gate every morning, my heart started pounding. I couldn't wait to see you ... to be with you ... to laugh with you ... to cry with you ... to love you. Every single day. No, Billie Ray, when you come back to get me, you won't find me here.

BILLIE RAY

Maybe you'll fall in love with another inmate.

EDNA

One's enough. I don't want to be a prison guard the rest of my life.

BILLIE RAY

Before you go, leave a forwarding address.

EDNA

I will.

BILLIE RAY

What are you going to do?

EDNA

I don't know, maybe go back to waitressing.

BILLIE RAY

I've been wondering how things might have turned out if I had actually made it to that game eight years ago.

EDNA

We would have never met, and I'd be ... somewhere else. And you'd be ...

BILLIE RAY

(Interrupting)

... Playing in the big leagues.

(Pause)

BILLIE RAY (Continued)

I hope it doesn't hurt.

EDNA
It won't.

BILLIE RAY
Promise?

EDNA
I promise.

BILLIE RAY
It has crossed my mind over the past few days. I guess the suspense will soon be over.

(Pause)

BILLIE RAY (Continued)
All these years, I never could figure out what made me want to go back home that night. It was just a gut feeling. Ball Park or back home? It could have gone either way.

EDNA
In my dream last night, you kept whispering over and over again, "I love you, Edna."

BILLIE RAY
And what were you whispering to me?

EDNA
"Yes... yes... yes."

BILLIE RAY
Anything else?

EDNA
"You're innocent."

BILLIE RAY
You think God heard you?

EDNA
Loud and clear.

BILLIE RAY
But do you think He believed you?

EDNA

Without a doubt.

BILLIE RAY

Maybe now He won't be mad at me when I show up at the game in a few minutes.
Good seats. Right along the third base line.

EDNA

They did a big story on you in the paper today.

(Reading newspaper)

"Convicted murderer Billie Ray Michaels To Be Executed at Midnight. Michaels was convicted eight years ago of first-degree murder for beating his wife's lover to death with a baseball bat. Michaels has maintained he was innocent, and that he acted in self-defense."

BILLIE RAY

He came at me with a knife - after he finished his business with Faye.

EDNA

(Reading)

"Mr. Michaels filed several unsuccessful appeals over the years..."

BILLIE RAY

(Interrupting)

... But they had good lawyers, and we didn't. Does it say that in there?

EDNA

(As if she's reading)

But they had good lawyers, and we didn't.

(To BILLIE RAY)

Yes, it's right here.

BILLIE RAY

What's the weather like outside?

EDNA

Cold and rainy.

BILLIE RAY

Better wear my raincoat, so I don't catch cold. I'm sure He'll have His raincoat.

EDNA

You're damned right he'll have his raincoat, top of the line, probably London Fog.

(Pause)

BILLIE RAY

I just had this strange feeling something was wrong. While I was on my way to the ball park, I suddenly felt this emptiness in the pit of my stomach. I needed to see Faye. So I turned around, and headed back home. It was so hot and muggy, you could cut the air with a knife.

EDNA

(Trying to distract him)

Billie Ray, I think some people around here know about you and me.

BILLIE RAY

It's certainly possible. I told the editor of the prison newspaper all about us.

EDNA

You did what?

BILLIE RAY

And when the story's published next week, my guess is a lot more people will know about us.

EDNA

Have you gone completely out of your mind?

BILLIE RAY

What are they going to do? Fire you? You're leaving, anyway. And what on earth could they do to me? Put me in solitary confinement for a month? I should be so lucky.

EDNA

You're right. What difference does it make?

BILLIE RAY

They would have found out about us sooner or later.

EDNA

I was looking through all of your baseball cards last night. A picture of you should have been in there.

BILLIE RAY

When I was seven or eight years old, I was sitting on the front steps of our house, flipping through cards. And I remember saying to myself, one day there's going to be a picture of me on a baseball card.

EDNA

There should have been.

BILLIE RAY

My little league coach said I was a natural. You know what he called me?

EDNA

What?

BILLIE RAY

"A Little Star ... A Little Star waiting to shine in the big leagues."

EDNA

When I first saw you coming through that gate eight years ago, I knew I was in big trouble. You looked at me with the sweetest smile I ever saw. I'll never forget that smile. You were a little star, all right.

BILLIE RAY

The second I laid eyes on you, I knew this place wouldn't be so bad. I had this gut feeling we'd end up together. That's why I was smiling. Course I didn't know for sure, but it was a pretty strong feeling.

EDNA

It's called love at first sight.

BILLIE RAY

Better slow down, Edna. Those witnesses in the other room will think I've got tears in my eyes because I'm afraid. But I'm not afraid.

EDNA

I know you're not.

BILLIE RAY

When they stretch me out on that table and take my arm, I'll be thinking about you, and I'll be thinking about getting to the game. And that's it. But I won't be afraid.

EDNA

I know you won't be.

BILLIE RAY

God's waiting for me along the third base line, and He knows damn well I didn't mean to kill that man that night.

EDNA

He knows.

BILLIE RAY

I was going to meet a coach at the game. He was from the big leagues, and I think he was planning to sign me up. But I never met him. When I got home that night, I went to the garage and got my baseball bat. It felt real heavy.

EDNA

It's all behind you now.

BILLIE RAY

I never told you ...

EDNA

(Interrupting)

... I know, but it's all behind you.

BILLIE RAY

I want you to know. I opened the back door, went inside the house and stood in the kitchen. I was squeezing my baseball bat so hard; sweat was dripping all over the place. I just waited and listened for a few minutes.

EDNA

You won't have to think about it anymore.

(Silence)

BILLIE RAY

Did I already have my last meal?

EDNA

We had it together.

BILLIE RAY

I'm going senile. You said it would be painless, and I'd just go to sleep. You didn't tell me I'd go senile first.

EDNA

Do you remember what we did after dinner?

BILLIE RAY

I get the feeling all this happened just a short time ago. Wait a minute, I can see it clearly now. The two of us are facing each other, and we're holding hands, and there's a Minister present. I say, "I do," and you say, "I do."

EDNA

When I was growing up, I never in my wildest dreams thought I'd get married in prison.

BILLIE RAY

I never once seriously considered marrying a prison guard. I'm sure your parents will be thrilled. You'll be a widow before they even know you're married.

EDNA

They'll never know I married you.

BILLIE RAY

Why not?

EDNA

It would only upset them. They wanted me to marry a doctor.

BILLIE RAY

Tell them you could've done worse. I could've been a lawyer.

EDNA

I'm not telling them anything.

BILLIE RAY

They'll find out about us.

EDNA

How will they find out?

BILLIE RAY

I'll send them a note from heaven.

EDNA

I love you.

BILLIE RAY

What time is it?

EDNA

Just don't think about it.

BILLIE RAY

Easy for you to say.

EDNA

They said I could go with you in the other room.

BILLIE RAY

What's in the other room? Oh. I almost forgot. It must be that damn senility again.

EDNA

I'll be with you.

(Silence)

BILLIE RAY

I went upstairs, and waited outside the bedroom. My heart was racing a mile a minute. I felt like an idiot, standing there in the dark. I couldn't believe I was having these thoughts about Faye. I didn't know what the hell had come over me. Faye wasn't seeing someone else. I felt bad for even thinking it ...

EDNA

I'll be with you the whole time ...

BILLIE RAY

... She's probably asleep. I'll just kiss her goodnight, and run like hell to the ball park. The coach from the big leagues was waiting for me. I opened the door slowly, and there was Faye, on her knees. And standing in front of her was this man. She got up and started putting her clothes on. She kept looking at me with those big, blue eyes, and she screamed out my name. I started swinging, and everything turned red.

EDNA

The whole time. I'll be with you the whole time.

BILLIE RAY

I swear to God, the man drew a knife on me. He tried to stab me, and so I hit him.

(There are three loud knocks on the wall. EDNA rests her head on BILLIE RAY's shoulder, as she places the glove in his lap.)

EDNA

I had a dream about you last night, Billie Ray.

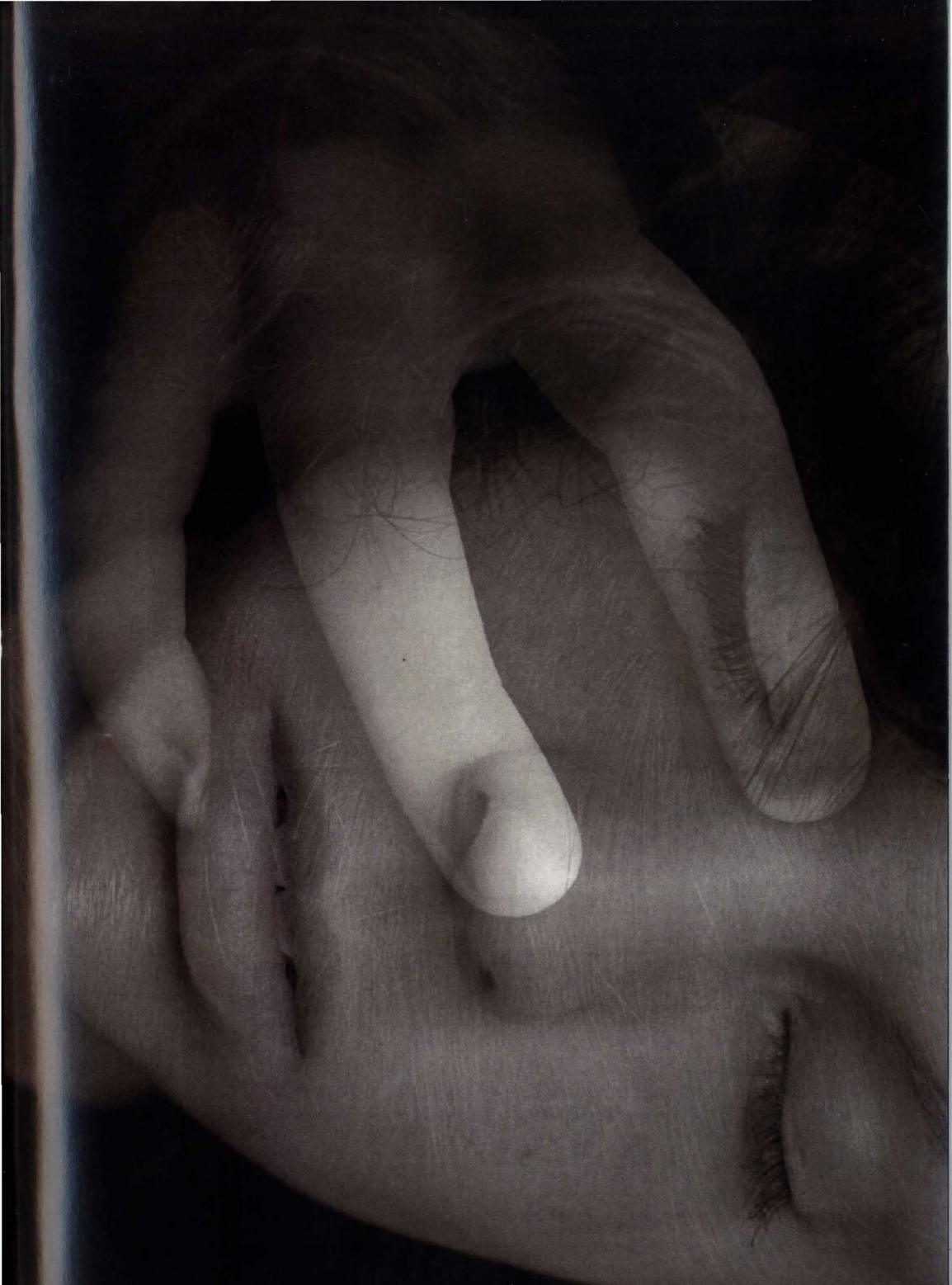
(Three more knocks)

EDNA (Continued)

We were making love along the third base line. Right in front of God.

(LIGHTS FADE)

END OF PLAY



ALEJANDRA GUERRA

You Can Still Make Out the Stars

SIMON PENCHIK

You can still make out the stars
though it's noon and the beach
changes - you can tell by the feel

and listening for engine scrap
breaking apart, smelling from smoke
expects you to stand up barefoot

keep struggling with shoreline
--you're not new to this
will start the grill weeks ahead

as if stars are never sure
are milling around, forgot all about
the darkness you're breathing in

and no way now to pick and choose
the fires however small or close
to some ocean or daylight

till it creaks and your mouth
no longer lit for kisses
and songs about nothing.



NICHOLAS ZAPPOLA

The Wall and Sunlight

SIMON PENCHIK

This wall and sunlight
hiding under the faded wallpaper
though its flowers no longer move

--a single 3X5 snapshot
brings the room down
in flames and further off

the rickety wooden frame
smelling from corners
already broken open

lifted alongside in pieces
and the glass in pieces
holds you closer, closer

and your chest keeps warm
--it alone left standing
as if the wall you don't use anymore

could recognize the place
without getting lost, or your voice
or the arms next to her.

Blue Fear

D.C. PANKO

Why is my back so cold?

I can barely feel the tips of my fingers as if they are rigid and locked. A surge of energy build inside of me in preparation to lift myself up off this damp and cold roadway but as soon as I think I am pulling myself up, I haven't moved an inch. I can only see out of my right eye and it seems all blurry. Fleeting flashes of light and dark. I hear muffled noises...sounds like mumbling voices, laughter, and static radio chatter in the distance.

Oh my God, I am burning all over my body now, but I cannot let out a scream, my throat is full.

My head falls off to the right, I can feel hot metal- tasting fluid begin to leave my throat, run the length of the inside of my face and run down the outside of my cheek.

I inhale the largest gasp of air I can muster to fill my lungs again. Each gasp of air only seems to make this sharp pain in my stomach worse.

What is this noise?

Are they laughing?

I can see two shadowy figures hovering above me pulling on an object attached to my body and rummaging through my pockets. I can see one shadow kicking me in my stomach but I don't feel anything. Shouldn't this hurt?

Why can't I move anything?

Where am I?

Why don't I remember?

[Radio chatter]:

[Dispatch] Dispatch to 1201 what is your location? Repeat, dispatch to 1201, what is your location?

[Sergeant] Where was he out last HQ?

[Dispatch] Unknown, he advised he was out with two subjects in the 900 block alleyway...then got cut off. His emergency button was activated on the radio but he did not respond yet.

[Sergeant] All units perform a search pattern in each 900 block of your sectors. Dispatch request the helicopter perform a search.

[Dispatch] 10-4: All units we are getting reports that an officer down in the 900 block alleyway of 11th street. Repeat officer down...

I think they left now; this pain is so unbearable and constant. My breath is short. The sirens are getting louder; they must be close now. Where am i?

Francesca, Francesca, I'm downstairs honey bring Connor down.

[Francesca]: Hi honey, how was your day?

Typical, call to call listening to how messed up everyone's lives have become. One thing I notice is that it takes people years to get their lives the way they are and they expect the office to solve their problems within five minutes. When you don't, they blame you and show their discontent for you. How thankless. I couldn't wait to get back home. How was Connor today?

[Francesca]: he actually took three steps! I couldn't believe that I didn't have the camera in my hands this time but he actually did it. I tried to get him to walk again but he decided to crawl instead.

That's great!! Great job buddy, come here to dada. I missed you buddy, did you miss me?

Oh God I'm still here. I should be home by now... [Shrieking internally] but the words aren't coming out.

[Dispatch]: Dispatch to 1201, do you read?

[Dispatch]: Dispatch to 1201, did you copy my last, medics are staging?

[Sergeant muffled]: GET THOSE DAMN MEDICS ON SCENE!!!

Why is it taking so long? I feel numb now; the pain isn't as bad anymore. I hope they hurry. Please God let me get through this; I just wasn't to go home. I need to call my wife and let her know I'm okay. I must be getting picked up. I feel lighter. My body is tingling. It is warm except for my feet. They are planted into the pavement. My torso is light and extending upwards as if I am being pulled into two directions. Oh I finally got up!! Thank God I am okay. Wait, why do I see myself on the ground still? No, there is no one around me yet...

I love you Connor. Never before have I thought that I would be a father. I remember the day you were born; I followed you into the nursery at the hospital. I watched the nurses wrap you into the receiving blankets. You grabbed my finger with your whole hand. I cried but never told your mother.

I still remember arguing with your mother a year ago about having to add these designs into these nursery walls. Now that I look down upon you in your crib, I see that you look more like me every day. You roll to your side, sleep with your mouth open, and rub your feet together just as I do. I wish I could touch you and hold you in my arms again. I fear that you may never know me; you are so young. I only hope mommy can explain enough about me that gives you an idea of the man I once was.

Goodbye Francesca, my love. Please don't cry. Why is the phone in your hand? I can't believe they called you instead of telling you in person. Baby, you need to get off the bathroom floor now. You have to be strong for our son. I am sorry that I am making you do this alone. I wish you knew I was standing there with you. You look so beautiful. I wish I had spent more time with you and held you at night as you always wanted me to. If I could only go back, I would hold you longer, I would hold you tighter.

I don't feel warm and I don't feel cold. I am transparent. Nothing is clear. My body doesn't feel like a body at all, it feels like particles of sand whirling around the air, weightless with no shape yet held together in some unspecified shell.

[All is dark]



MATTHEW MENDISANA

Immovable

JESSICA WEIN

There is a pit in my stomach,
A dark river
I crawl into my cave
I drown in dunes of captivity

I slowly turn gray

But one day
I will sprint
I will glide
I will find another cave
Until I am complete

Sanguine

AUTUMN THORPE

The evolution to self emits light.
Glowing red, it exudes optimism.
I met someone.
Open doors for others to follow.
Inviting people in is dangerous.
Feed from those who radiate sanguinity.
Abducting the light and drinking its blood.
There lay a heart, vacant and dark.
The eternal struggle to discover and love begins.
Once that is accomplished the real challenge awaits
Love other, grow immune to the hungry pessimist,
Relics to the self.

Trash Bags and Manicures

AMANDA DAVIDSON

"Wonderful to see you again." But there is no one to receive it.

She wears a red snowsuit faded in some spots to a light pink. Her luggage, her life, is wrapped in trash bags occupying the seat across from her. Every time a waitress or customer walks by she eyes it protectively like a lion does its beaten prey. For fifteen minutes all she does is study her perfectly manicured nails. The rest of her may be unkempt, her hair needs shampoo, her body odor is sickeningly palpable, but those nails are aristocratic. There is more nobility on her pinky finger than in the wallets of any other patron at any other table. And she knows it. It's all she can do but to pull her mind from them and back to her trash bags and reality.

"Who's she talkin' to?" Cassie asks.

I shrug. It's too early in the morning for that brand of question.

"Has she ordered anything?"

I stare blankly at the source—my boss—of such an obvious question. "Just water."

He shifts his gaze to the woman, then back at me, his eyes vacant and devoid of humanity. "Tell her to leave," he whispers.

I understand his point of view. After all, every party once within her vicinity has emigrated to across the restaurant; every party, that is, except one. There is a family sitting at a table two feet from hers. They seem unfazed by the stench and schizophrenia. The wife feeds her newborn baby, while the husband drinks his triple espresso hastily. The couple embodies the sleep deprivation of fresh parenthood.

And so an invisible fence has been built down the center of the café. On one side are those who haughtily scrutinize the woman reflected across the line; on the other there is the red woman and a family oblivious—perhaps who choose to be so—to the sets of judgmental eyes futilely drilling holes in their steel-like disregard. I applaud the latter group. I hope they never look up from their breakfasts and trash bags; I hope that, unlike the more populated side, they never even realize there is a line.

The woman politely excuses herself from her table and unseen companion. She heads in the direction of the restroom. The neighboring family beckons me over. I grab a fresh pot of coffee (serving instincts predict the need for refills). Instead, "Is that woman homeless?"

I answer the husband, "I believe so."

"Can you ask if she wants anything to eat? On me."

Speechless, I nod. The mere fact that they remained on this side of the invisibly erected wall has earned my respect, but now it is too much. I am not accustomed to philanthropy in this setting. I wait in fruitful anticipation for her return. I am no longer a waitress; I am the bearer of good news, the Samaritan's messenger. As soon as she sits I approach her side, breathing through my mouth.

"The gentlemen over there," I indicate with a tilt of the head, "would like to pay for your meal."

"Oh. Well, if he wants to treat me to breakfast."

It is not the response I expected. It is too nonchalant for my taste. In my mind,

she would leap from her seat and shower the man with the type of gratitude that only starvation can supply. How naïve of me to think she and her impeccable nails were immune to pride!

"The waffle, please." A lightning quick reaction. Clearly she had considered it before the opportunity arose.

After delivering her order to the kitchen, I wander across the restaurant to the "other" side; they are impatient for refills. Before I can grab a stale pot of coffee, my path is infiltrated.

"She's still here"—my boss, again.

"She ordered." He doesn't need to know the details.

The bell in the kitchen rings, signifying an order is ready. It's the waffle. I pile on extra syrup and ample amounts of butter. My job has taken on new meaning. I am bringing food to someone who doesn't take it for granted, who won't send it back because it's not up to five-star par. I delicately lay the plate in front of her, still warm, interrupting another nail inspection. The scent of baked goods overpowers bad hygiene. She nods in approval as if she eats breakfast every day, but her eyes tell a different story. They are bottomless pits of tangled memories and hunger. Sure enough, the waffle disappears from her plate in a matter of minutes.

One last trip to the bathroom, and she emerges, bids her friend adieu, and carefully collects her plastic wrapped properties. With hesitancy, she approaches me at the counter with a final request perched on her lips. "Is it alright if I leave early today?"

I have no idea what she means but am ready with my answer nonetheless: "Yes, of course. Take the rest of the day off."



CHRISTINA FERNANDEZ

A Higher Power

ROSALIE SCHWARTZ

I step back in time, the 80s; belief in a "Higher Power," the word.
To whom does this attribute go? Collective mass movements, I mutter.
OA mentors and meetings in my borough of blasphemous birth.
Couldn't stop guzzling the candy and bread, compulsion heaping fat to flab.
I indulged and phoned 'til diabetes took hold;
and rising to the occasion by self-commiseration, I ate a heavily buttered roll.

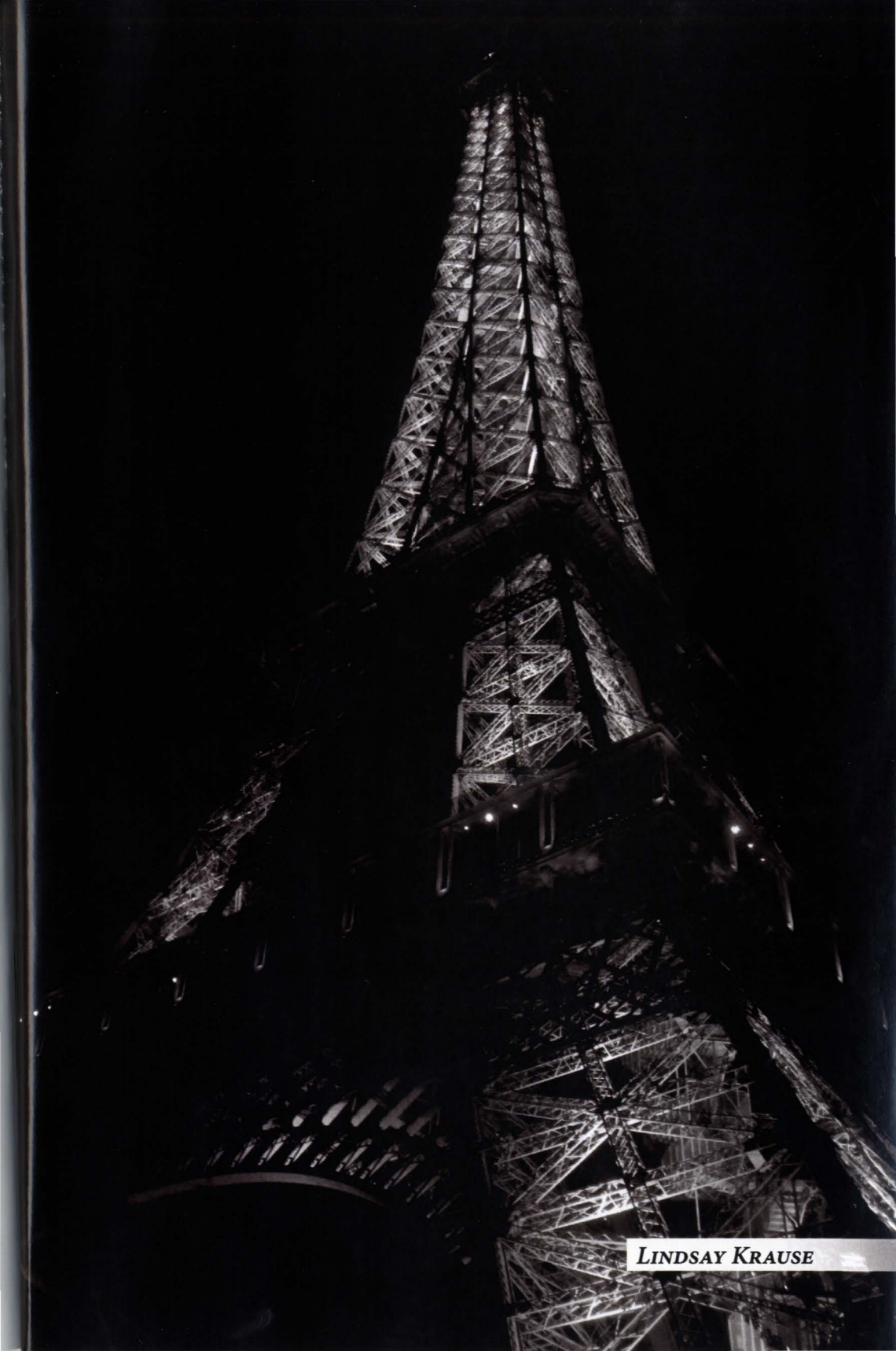
Same time, another station: moveable feasts in city parks,
celebrating Pagan rites in circles around a fire,
"To rid ourselves of...an artificial world...out of touch with nature.
To honor the elements...in order to see the natural rhythms...around us."¹
We toasted and honored the Goddess and God, eating cakes, inhaling sun, chanting,
and turning the other way, tossing the herb for life's wish most desired. And I forget
what that was. Giving Bacchus a glass of wine, drinking bottles to his passion and
pluck. I kiss you, Minerva, warrior goddess of wisdom and justice, patron of science
and learning. Those truly, wondrous days.

Late 70s, under the flashes of setting sun, we wandered into Central Park,
to seek a psychedelic dream, my boyfriend Mort, and soul mate, Steve, a Christian
Socialist, to boot, against the war in "Nam," like me, raising cooperation over com-
petition. We sucked in our roaches, sipping our beers, and nibbled the mushrooms
of magic. Seclusion in the dusk of woods, a perfect monument; with props in hand,
for this was preconceived, we tied two husky branches to an upright tree, and made
a cross; Steve begged us to put nails into his palms; instead, dark spots and marker
blood was made. No doubt, a material pinch. He put the crown upon his head. We
roped him to the criss-crossed core, and heard some Gaelic words. The martyr closed
his eyes. While silence filled the moonless sky.

I joined the dropout generation, 1960s; Watts and Castaneda were the rage;
Buddhist swamis, ashrams set the stage. Find them on the celebrity page.
The books revealed a new Divine, which knows the real is not sublime.
The Tao then took my hand - "(action through non-action) (Couldn't have said that
better.) simplicity, (I should win awards complicating everything.) spontaneity, (Oh
yeah!) harmony between the individual and the cosmos." (Great idea, but couldn't do
that cup of tea.)

And what is more, I lacked "...Compassion, (Showed it when I pleased.)
Moderation, (I followed those who lived extremes, even to the point of death; it
turned me on.) and Humility;"² (I felt inferior instead, and saw a Shrink.)
The leader shall a follower be. I like that best.

My paths have splintered infinitely. A Higher Power calls us to unite against the wars,
to send troops home, use galactic funds of war for human need: open jobs and public
works, keep social programs intact, health we can afford, save homes, and educate us all.



LINDSAY KRAUSE

Alligators

GEORGE LONGENECKER

Around the bend in the canal
we startle an enormous alligator
sunning; awakened by the clack
of our canoe paddles, he splashes
into dark water and slides beneath the canoe.

My heart beats faster- *you were scared*
she says- *well I was only six feet from an alligator-*
but other alligators ignore us, barely
turning their cloudy eyes, unwilling
to relinquish their sunny places.

Alligators are accustomed to daily
canoeists paddling the Loxahatchee,
maybe they know it's Sunday and surely
they know east where the first sun warms
their cold hides as they slither to
the bank to bask-just sun, no coffee.

Coffee with sugar, alligator?
Plantations of sugar and suburbs
from Alligator Alley to Palm Beach have
drained the Everglades and the Loxahatchee;
they nearly killed off the Seminole and the alligators
who now emblazon football pennants, sweatshirts
and coffee mugs: *Gators! Seminoles!*

But the alligator basks and seems to smile,
knowing who's drifting to extinction first-
we canoe around the bend where five
more alligators sleep in the sun.

Elegy to a Red Maple

GEORGE LONGENECKER

You grow old, your trunk half-dead,
red maple at the trail junction,
you are inferior to the sweet sugar maple,
neither as straight nor as large as *acer saccharum*,
soft grey with your shaggy bark and mossy base.
I rest against you, face to the faint winter sun,
you are old and weathered
 but alive and strong.

Who is to say that you are inferior?
You have the first red buds in the late winter
and your canopy is arching green in summer.
Who knows what memories there are
 In a tree older than I.
Who knows why I think of my brother
 Who fell out of the sky,
unfurling a green canopy
as the army-issue parachute failed.

Over and over he plunges out of a summer sky,
memories rushing faster and faster,
flowers closer and closer
the air in his ears.

Who knows if he thought of our mother
who could never forget the summer afternoon
she and our father got the news
that my brother had fallen from the sky.
He passed through the same vagina and nursed
the same breast, slept in the next bed,
ate at the same table, and climbed
 the same backyard maple.

I cannot know what he saw,
 But I imagine,
knowing the laws of gravity,
the green trees closer and closer
faster-gray metal casket, folded flag,
gladiolas and the ground.

You grow old, so does his grave.
I sometimes forget things.

You, red maple at the forest junction,
you know, I'm not bothered anymore
by memories.

Knowing the laws of gravity
And the lifespan of trees,
You will fall one day, you
who have lived so long, red maple,
let me rest against your rough trunk awhile,
absorbing the winter sun.

About The Authors

Penelope Coin is an English major at Lynn. She enjoys reading, exploring, and meeting odd people.

Desiree Cordero is studying Computer Animation and Illustration as her major with a minor in Film. She enjoys the simplicities in life and is on a pursuit for completing projects that she created years ago.

Amanda Davidson is an English major at Lynn. She has her sights set on graduate school, hoping to further her love for reading and writing.

John Deering attended Lynn University from September 2007 to July 2012, majoring in psychology. Writing has been a lifelong hobby since early childhood: short stories, novels, plays and movie scripts.

David Fleisher is an Associate Professor in the College of Liberal Education at Lynn University. His collection of short plays entitled *Grave Concerns* have been produced at theaters throughout the United States and Ireland. He is also co-author of the non-fiction book *Death of an American: The Killing of John Singer*.

Marceline Fleurilus has a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice (2010) and a Bachelor's in Psychology (2009) from Lynn. She won a Poetry Award during the Haitian American week at Lynn in 2008. She was a regular contributor to the Lynn University Coffeehouse, and was also co-founder of the Lynn University Creative Writing Club.

Alejandra Guerra is a Journalism major at Lynn. She enjoys taking pictures, writing, playing the piano, art, literature, and nature. She hopes to one day travel the all over the world and become a world famous journalist.

Lizbeth Keiley is an Associate Professor of English at Lynn University. She has published poems in *The Denver Quarterly*, *Verse*, *Florida Studies*, and several other journals. Her manuscript, *Her Stranger in Exile* has been a finalist for the National Poetry Series, The Iowa Prize, The Bakeless Literary Prize, and others. She is currently working on enhancing her understanding of theology in a Masters of Divinity program at St. Thomas University.

Adira Kessler is an English major at Lynn. She enjoys animals and playing guitar. She hopes to one day beautify the world.

George Longenecker teaches in the Department of English, Humanities and Social Sciences at Vermont Technical College. His recent publications are in *Atlanta Review*, *Patterson Review* and *City Works Literary Journal*.

Stephen Linsley is employed as an Environmental Scientist and Inspector in San Francisco. He has been writing poetry and fiction since 1975, including three novels and a novella. He enjoys wildlife watching, oil painting, and Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. His poetry has been accepted for publication in *The Distillery*, *Desert Voice*, *Carquinez Poetry Review*, and many more.

Shawna Mann graduated from Lynn with a major in English in spring 2012. She was co-founder and former President of the Creative Writing Club. She will be furthering her education with a MA and Ph.D. in English. She hopes one day to become an English Professor.

Jeff Morgan is a Professor of English at Lynn University. He is the author of *Sarah Orne Jewett's Feminine Pastoral Vision: The Country of the Pointed Firs*, and he also edited a new edition of *Country*, providing an introduction, notes, and bibliography. As the author of numerous essays and poems, his latest essay, "The Constructive Marginal of *Moby Dick*: Ishmael and the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity," appears this spring in *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*.

Ashley Nazario is a junior studying Psychology as her major with a minor in Criminal Justice. She intends on fulfilling her dream to be a police officer as well as a part-time clinical psychologist working with the well members of society. She is "beginning to become the change [she] want[s] to see in the world on step at a time!"

Daniel Panko is a Lynn student in the Criminal Justice program.

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in the *Partisan Review*, *The New Yorker*, and elsewhere.

Donna Pucciani has a Ph.D. in Humanities from New York University and has published poetry on four continents. Her books of poetry include *The Other Side of Thunder*, *Jumping Off the Train*, *Chasing the Saints*, and *To Sip Darjeeling at Dawn*. She has been nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize, and has won awards from the National Federation of State Poetry Societies and the Illinois Arts Council.

Rosalie Schwartz is an adjunct professor at Lynn with a Ph.D. in linguistics. She has published poems in several journals and performed artistic events using found materials, poetry, and improvisational music.

Matthew Soderblom is an English major at West Virginia University. He has been a participant of the *Young Writer's Studio* in Iowa University's Creative Writing program. He hopes to one day become an English teacher and/or professor. He enjoys playing guitar, writing, reading, and listening to music.

Autumn Thorpe is a Biology major at Lynn. She is currently participating in the Honors and 3.0 Program. After Lynn, she intends on pursuing a Ph.D. in Evolutionary Biology.

Jessica Wein is Biology major at Lynn. Her hobbies include writing, dancing, and acting.

